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ABSTRACT

Efforts in the United States to provide a higher quality education for everyone regardless of race, class, and gender have had, at best, a very modest effect. This paper suggests that the effect of a change strategy depends on the discourse (how things are talked about when teachers solve problems, plan their work, create policy, and explain things to one another). Discourse I in schooling cultures is a discourse about how to do the present work of schools better. Discourse II is a discouse about how to create demystified schooling. Discourse I relates to conventional and traditional teaching and organizing of schools. Discourse II relates to creating a transformed school that is about learning-learning for everyone there: an organization whose purpose is to educate so the results no longer correlate with social class, race or gender. It is argued that traditional education is based on the cultural myth of the American Dream, which legitimizes stratification by race, class, and gender. The challenge is how to change the work of schools. This requires a fundamental change in the way schools are restructured, teachers developed, and leadership provided. New conditions and relationships must be created through substantive systemic change, which begins with a new and different discourse. (LMI)

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CHANGING THE DISCOURSE IN SCHOOLS

Eugene Eubanks and Ralph Parish

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CHANGING THE DISCOURSE IN SCHOOLS

Eugene Eubanks and Ralph Parish

Over the past three decades there has been an ever increasing effort throughout state, federal and local agencies, public and private, to change and attune schooling to future societal needs. The progress makes it clear that the social reproduction process of American schooling is a very fixed cultural way. Efforts to change the outcomes in schooling so that the outcomes no longer highly correlate with race, class and gender and to provide a higher quality and level of education for everyone have had at best a very modest effect. That assessment is probably a kind one. Why is this? Are the programs and concepts offered as solutions poor ones? Perhaps some, but many were excellent and had a potential of substantively moving to a new paradigm. Are the people in schools so limited that they are unable to see the need of such things? Are they so frightened of change that they are highly resistant?-some but not most. Do we not know ways to help people in non technical service organizations change? Although such knowledge is relatively new, there is sufficient knowledge and experience to begin. The path is clear, although all the parts although all the parts are not yet discovered. What is going on here?

We are going to suggest a consideration of two ideas. One is that a focus upon processes of change-is it top down-is it bottom up-is it renewing- are the wrong questions and such questions are culture's way

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to maintain the system of social reproduction. There are examples of top down change that work very well, but not most. There are examples of bottom up change that work very well, but not nearly as frequent as the literature suggests. Are there examples of interactive and renewal change that work very well? Yes, but generally such efforts never really get to interactive and renewal. The teacher craft culture and the schooling culture are formidable barriers. There must be something more to making systemic change, than understanding and using effective change processes. We will suggest the something more is the substance of the thing. What is it that needs changing? Is it something demystified from the culture and understood to be a cause of what is troubling us (the hegemony)? Or have we identified a symptom as a cause <as cultural ways will promote>? Thus, we often exchange one cultural way for another that has the same sorting effect.

We suggest that the effect a change will have will depend upon the discourse that sustains and accompanies the change process and effort. By discourse we mean how things are talked about when teachers and principals solve problems, plan their work, create policy, and explain things to one another. Discourse is truly engaging in dialogue about important relationships and conditions in the school settings. Discourse is a colloquy of hope, of despair and of how things are at school.

Discourse I in schooling cultures, is a discourse about how to do the present work of schools better. Discourse II must be a discourse about how to create demystified schooling. Discourse I relates to conventional and traditional teaching and organizing of schools. Discourse II relates to creating a transformed school that is about learning-learning for everyone there: an organization whose purpose is to educate so the results no longer correlate with social class, race or gender.

Discourse II schools create an organizational setting that is continually changing and developing because it is continually learning. Historically change efforts and attempts to improve schooling have been and remain a Discourse I discussion. What we want to consider here is, can Discourse II schools be created? What is the substance of Discourse II and how do we get it to be the change agenda in schools? How do we get those in school cultures who are good people, but who believe what their cultural ways have taught them, to deconstruct and demystify the very things that are their foundation? How do we create this discourse so that anger, defensiveness, guilt and denial are not the consequences of our dialogue? What follows is our discourse on this issue. We offer it as a beginning or at least a something.

To deny a person intellectual and personal development of the

highest quality in the 21st Century, and therefore now, is to deny an opportunity for a meaningful life and future. Has not that always been so - you may ask? No not really. True, in the past the better educated you were - the more options you had - and the better likelihood you had of earning a higher standard of living - or the more chance to at least be in some manner in charge of your own life: to be free. That is why Western cultures have assured the quality schooling of the privileged and limited the schooling of others as a priority. The name is hegemony. That is one reason why, in this period of change, pressure for privatizing, vouchering and other marketing strategies is advocated. They will maintain schooling hegemony for the privileged, in the name of choice and freedom. It is an old cultural way. It is the way of the Robber Barons, then and now.

In industrial and mercantile capitalism there were other opportunities for persons to acquire meaningful work and financial rewards. You could learn by experience and there were many ways to still have a decent life. Education was a way to aid this development. Experience and on the job development were also ways to some social security, although much more difficult, more time consuming and often less rewarding. It wasn't such a big deal in America for the privileged to get the superior education, because most believed everyone could still do all right. Thus, the American Dream

myth continues. The days before the big tube and other technology advances. Those days are almost gone and will be gone very shortly. Many are beginning to understand that to assign someone to an apprenticeship, has the effect of probably assigning someone to a limited/lesser life. America, more than any other nation, may have encouraged a higher, but a still limited amount of social movement, but the hegemony of social class still reigns. Those who work in schools are still able to maintain the historical hegemony.

I remember a young man, Percy, who was in my 5th and 6th grade classrooms. This was during WWII. He was always a little strange, it seemed to many of us. He dressed in bib overalls (only country people or lowly working people wore them). Percy did not always appear very clean and did not talk exactly like the rest of us. Yet, I had come to like him. He had a good sense of humor and if you took the time to know him, he was often fun to be around. He was very quiet and never took an active role in class or school things. In my recollection, he had never been identified as good in anything we did, in school. He usually only came to school three or four days a week, except in winter. Then, in the spring of our 6th grade year, he just disappeared. He, plainly, wasn't at school anymore. After a couple of weeks, I asked our teacher about Percy. She said to me, he won't be in our class anymore. Why not was my response. She informed me

that he had had his 12th birthday. This concerned me because my twelevth birthday was coming up in less than a month. When I pushed for more information, she only said that his family had decided that it was time for him to go to work with his father. I already knew that Percy's father was a "junkman."

At the time it seemed to me that Percy was rewarded and was already being treated like an adult. He worked every day and no school. Wouldn't that be great! I visited with my parents about such a possibility for me and going to work in a store, like our family did. They gave the continuing dialogue concerning education and school and that I "was going to amount to something." Those dreaded words. The point here is Percy. Years later when I finally understood what really happened with Percy, I tried to find him to see what had happened. I went to the place where his father had his junk yard. It was gone and so was the old weather worn house next to the junk yard-Percy's home. I learned later that he had gone into the Army and had been killed in Korea. I know now that there are legions of Percy's in America, as there are also legions of me.

Both of us started on our paths from birth. By the time either of us was old enough or wise enough to understand that most of the choices that controlled our lives were not made by us, or really our parents, it was too late, especially for Percy. It was not or is not

that I was somehow smarter or more intellectually gifted than Percy. I had learned that Percy was smart and could learn anything. Just don't like school stuff, he had told me once. That was OK, I was somewhat embarrassed that I liked school anyway. You sure do like reading he had told me. How come you do so much of it, he wanted to know. I described my feelings about the adventures you could have through reading. All the stuff you could know that others didn't know - how good it felt just to know things. He looked at me in a funny way and shook his head. However, I noticed after that, he started carrying library books around more. One day I caught him reading when it wasn't reading time. It was Jack London - one of my favorites. I had told him one day, "You're just like someone out of Jack London" This was just before he left.

What really hurt was he never even told me goodbye or what was happening to him. I must have been his closest friend, except for his younger brother and sister. At the time I remember thinking that he must not have liked me as much as I had thought. Percy had been in a bad mood just before he left, to which I had attributed no meaning. Now I understand that while I thought it might have been great to go to work and not have to do school stuff (kid stuff), the one who had to live that reality did not. His path was not filled with a lot of hope, good news or joy. **America's cultural ways owned him.** His path

was filled mostly with, "looking for ways out," without much hope of finding any, unless he got lucky. He was trapped in the "working boys" culture described so well by Lois Weiss (1990).

The path left open to me had some good news, hope, and joy available but also a prescribed amount. It took me a long time, into my first year of teaching, before I saw that schools were a part of this sorting of people. We teachers are instruments of this sorting of children according to their appropriate condition. It has taken me much longer to search and understand the why and how of it, at least to the degree that I have. When we become teachers, it is never explained to us that sorting by race, class, and gender is an essential part of our job. Our teacher culture leads us to believe just the opposite. It is a cultural way. Unless we begin to unravel what is going on, we continue to believe that since we are doing our work and things turn out poorly, it must be someone else's fault. It is an ingrained teacher cultural belief.

We work in urban schools trying to stop the sorting. We come into daily contact with teachers, principals, students, and families who are all frustrated and angry about what is happening to them. It seems that no matter what they do, there is no joy in Leadville. They keep striking out way too often. Urban schools are full of Percy's, regardless of their race or gender. We blame each other, we blame

downtown, but mostly we blame the children and their families. We blame everywhere except where the problem probably really lies, in a social/cultural system that requires and needs to create persons of poverty and to preserve a well-protected social hegemony of privilege.

Everyone is doing their work: those who work in urban schools will tell you. Yet children are being pushed out, others don't do well, and many schools are full of stress and anger. Teachers and principals become resentful and defeated. Everyone plays the games of "not my fault" and "victim." The world of urban schools, whether they are in the suburbs, inner city, or poverty rural, is full of announced good intentions and poor outcomes. Most of all they are full of denial. Not my fault. Not our fault. It's their fault. What is going on here?

Let me describe a discourse recently made to us by an urban teacher. She was white, over 40, more than twenty years teaching experience, and very angry and insistent that we hear and appreciate (confirm) her presentation of why teachers in her urban school were not effective with many of their students: "They can't expect us to do it with classes over 30 and over 150 over all" - "They come from unstable, dysfunctional, and non supportive families" - "They expect us to teach this curriculum and most of them can't read and aren't smart enough to learn" - "The administration tells us that everyone

can and will learn, but they haven't a clue about how to do it, even if it were true" - "Authentic schools, is a phrase our principal learned at a recent conference. He tells us that this is a new relationship in schools. Most of us find it insulting to imply that we are somehow not authentic teachers and persons and it's our fault that schools aren't." As she delivered this group report, heads were nodding all over the room.

This teacher and her colleagues at this same meeting were in an urban school located in a suburban community. It had once, in the memory of a majority of the teachers, been an all white community and school. Over 98% of the teaching staff are still white and 80% of the administrative staff are white. Thirty per cent of the students are now nonwhite. Twenty-six percent are on free lunch. Twenty years ago there weren't five per cent on free lunch. In this suburban-**URBAN** school, as in most urban schools, the fundamental issue of race and racism could not only not be discussed but must be denied as even a factor in the schools. There has developed, in these urban school cultures, code words and phrases to express their cultural racism and anger. Chris Argyris (1978) calls this the undiscussables in organizations. Donald Schein (1992) discusses them as hidden cultural ways in an organization. They prevent organizational cultures from changing or identifying problems that block them from accomplishing

their purposes and becoming more authentic organizations. The code words allow for denial. However, everyone understands what is being said. The denial is for outsiders and self esteem.

It is not only the professional staff who participate in this organizational culture, so do the others who live in and with such schools. In our metropolitan area almost all of the school districts have some urban schools in them. School boards and school board elections regularly make use of the code words around preserving "standards". They regularly, in the name of some acceptable cultural value develop policies, that result in continued sorting by race, class, and gender. School boards, administrators, and teachers can thus deny any official racial practices. They practice them informally on a daily basis in terms of who they hire, who they promote, who gets suspended, who gets educated well or less well, and often who gets resources.

Other examples of these racially based cultural code words, besides those identified above are phrases like, "We're a school in transition," "Things have changed, students just aren't what they used to be," "You just can't teach as much as you used too," "We have drugs and crack babies now that teachers didn't have to deal with before," "The disintegration of the family structure makes it harder for children to learn," "Children are having children," and etc. The

words not only reflect the class, gender, and racial character of schooling, but the helplessness many urban educators feel about their ability to do anything about it. They desegregate school populations, and then re-segregate the students in buildings through programs, curriculum, and schedules. Schools sort through teaching methods and teachers. The right kids still get sorted or "tracked" down the right paths; including out the door.

It is not just majority Euro-ethnic teachers who use these code words and follow cultural ways. These code words are sometimes said by some minority principals, teachers, and others in these roles who have become white middle class by adoption and preference - the Clarence Thomas's of education. We must somehow find ways to help our educators confront this system of schooling that continues and maintains the hegemony of sorting. If not, then this nation that has so much promise will fail to meet its destiny. We will simply ride off into the sunset of history. Why do we say this?

The facts are that those who work in schools and those who send their children to schools are not told that schools sort children to fit America's social class hierarchy. We are told that ability and hard work are the secrets to success in schools and society. The implication is that those who do well must be the smartest and hardest working. That of course is another cultural myth and always has been.

In terms of getting a high quality education, nothing has yet replaced being born into advantage or privilege. Regardless of the morality and social justice of such a system, it met the needs of a developing industrial capitalist/market system that never had a wish to change the social order. As Alexander Hamilton told Thomas Jefferson, we did not fight the revolution to change the social order. Freedom, liberty, and democracy in Western cultures have historically been relative terms, likewise related to race, class, and gender. America is not an exception to this. Rather, America is a most successful model.

We are so fond, or at least some are so fond, of what politicians refer to as the "American Dream." The American Dream is the Horatio Alger myth told in wondrous and varied ways. Only in America can the poor and the refuse of the world come and be turned into millionaires in a short time. Only in American can you be born into poverty and degradation and through hard work, education, intelligence, and ability rise to the top and become wealthy and powerful. That is our story and we are stuck with it. It isn't that it isn't a good story or one that wouldn't be wonderful for a people to have. It isn't only that it is true for less than 1% of the population. The problem is that it is just what it says it is - a dream. Not a reality, not a description of how America works, not an expectation that those who live here or come here can reasonably have -- and it has never been

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so. Bloch (1959, 1986) calls it "the swindle of fulfillment." The facts of history are very clear about this swindle. It has always been a dream/swindle. A cultural myth that supports and gives deniability to the sorting. There was no way out for Percy. His family was part of it. My family was part of it. Our school was a major part of it. So was our community. Percy never had a chance. Neither do vast numbers of poverty, minority, and female children in our schools. It is no accident. Each gets the measured amount the hegemony allows.

This cultural myth allows the privileged to defend their privilege without guilt or explanation. This cultural myth allows for those not privileged to be required to blame themselves and accept their fate as "natural." This cultural myth works in many ways, so that fate, or nature, or the way things are, provide an explanation. Thus, no person or group is responsible. Either there comes a time when equity for all begins to become a real outcome or America is in considerable Postmodern 21st Century trouble. When all the rhetoric is said and done regarding school reform and restructuring, it is this historic cultural role of schooling that must be changed. School reform and school restructuring are tinkering concepts and words, at least to the degree they are used in our current educational discourse. They are words used to describe things like "school

improvement" or "staff development" or "restructuring" or "reform" or Year 2000" . Such words and such ideas result in maintaining schools that sort or doing an even better job of sorting, in the name of individualism and the American way. Such efforts come from a Discourse I perspective.

Discourse II must be about transformational issues. The work of schools must become learning: learning for all that enter; teacher, principal, students, and others. What we and others have called learning organizations (cultures - communities - pick the word). Learning organizations that provide outcomes where, at the very minimum, 80% of the student participants have quality intellectual and character development at a post-secondary level and have become lifelong learners. Anything less leaves America in the dust of a global world where intellect is the medium of exchange and power. To be the leader in such a world, probably eventually requires 90% to be developed to that level.

There is available knowledge that will allow us to develop these learning cultures that provide such schooling outcomes. We but lack, as a society, the cultural will and values to do so. Which means those at the top of the hegemony have not decided to voluntarily share power and dismantle the hegemony in the name of equity. They are afraid that if we create a nation of smart people, a consequence

might/will be that the historical hegemony will no longer be accepted. Americans do not trust themselves or others to be smart enough to create a better-more equitable society without at the same time creating a new set of losers out of the old winners. It is a fundamental cultural belief from capitalism and racism. (If they get better, we get worse.) Everything we have learned about change informs us that until such a time that high intellectual development for all becomes the common cultural purpose/discourse of schooling, the reforms that can change schooling will never be able to be implemented. This is the "stuff" of Discourse II.

What we must also recognize is that culture works in hidden and devious ways to maintain itself unchanged. The ways that most of us know about and practice regarding school reform and change are, in substance, ways we have learned from our teaching and school cultures. Ways that maintain Discourse I ideas, in the name of change. In Missouri, we are now trying to identify 75 academic benchmark standards that will enable us to compete with Europe and Japan. As if such academic standards could ever exist within the context of a Discourse I Paradigm. 75 Benchmark standards is a Discourse I paradigm. The only thing changed is the number of benchmarks. The sorting continues and continues with ever increasing hegemonic creativity.

The challenge before us is how to go about changing the work of schools. How do we change so that the work and convenience of the adults, Discourse I, takes second place to learning? - for students - for them - for others in the school. How do we help those in schools cut through the cultural myths. Without, at the same time, having those who work in schools be made to feel defensive, guilty, or at fault? How do we develop a Discourse II-discourse?

Educators with whom we work, and are now administrators, invariably come back to talk to us about this issue. Their conversation often begins something like this, "Well what we studied and talked about is true. We hear it and see it every day. What we want to know again is how do we change it? We get so frustrated. How do I change the discourse in my school?" One recently said, "We have no problem solving conditions in our school culture. They are describing adversarial ways and ways to identify personal blame when things don't go well that can be found in most schools. Some still want to call me boss and have me decide things for them. If I ask them what do they think, they respond in various ways, "that's not my job."

As our conversation continues and as we explore together what has to occur, there begins to come over their faces a look of unease. Eventually, we agree Discourse II is what has to occur. Then they

almost universally say, "but this is going to take a long time. The teachers where I work do not want to be free, except free to do whatever they want in their room. What can I do Monday?" When we say -- start, there is a long silence. Then they most often say something like, "they'd never let me." The belief among most practicing school leaders is that they may not have that much time. Five to ten years, the minimum to begin and get started down the learning path, is a long time for leadership positions in today's schools. It is part of the sorting way. If people have to keep starting over all the time, they never get very far. Changing leadership regularly is one way to keep starting over. Part of the structure that maintains the sorting, is that urban type schools often select charlatans and are not allowed any continuity.

In fact, most of what we need to know (the stuff of it) about how to develop schooling where everyone gets smart has been discovered, developed, and proven over at least the past 20 years. John Dewey talked about much of it 75 years ago. It isn't that the knowledge isn't available that can develop schooling so that 80-90% of our people can be developed to a level of a high quality post-secondary education. To do so, requires a fundamental change in the way we structure schooling, develop teachers, and provide leadership. **WE MUST CREATE NEW CONDITIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS.** We must first get those

in schools to understand that the present conditions and relationships are ways that the culture has historically provided for schools to reproduce and maintain the hegemony. It is cultures sorting work in schools and yet it is not labeled for us so that we know it easily. Most educators believe we are there for all the children, because we are decent people who want to help and need to believe it. Educators are also agents of the dominant class. It is necessary to deconstruct the sorting ways so that educators can no longer accept the existing system of schooling, without at the same time making us full of guilt. We must learn to ask different questions and to question everything we do in schools from the perspective of its effect upon creating learning conditions and relationships that do not sort and provide high levels of intellectual development for every student.

Unfortunately, it is still not established through public policy or cultural intent that all children in America are to be educated well. Urban type schools, wherever they are located, are filled with children who are not supposed to do well and they do not. One can argue that it is mostly social class prejudice or that it is mostly racism. Actually such an argument over how one is sorted into paths that lead nowhere, misses the point. It doesn't really matter, except to the one being sorted, whether one carries a social class burden, a racial burden, or a gender burden, or more than one of these. Which

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way one gets sorted is irrelevant to the fact that one is getting sorted for reasons that have nothing to do with intelligence, character, or ability.

If we are going to think about changing this schooling outcome (purpose of schooling), then we must first realize that what is involved is a substantive cultural change. Some (Sarason 1990, Sergiovanni 1990, Schein 1992) call it systemic change. It is the most difficult change of all, is always strongly resisted, and usually occurs when a particular dominant class understands that survival is at stake. In America and in schools there must be a strong social and cultural value that all are to be educated well. Sorting by class, race, and gender are no longer acceptable outcomes, for America's schools. Getting such a commitment is required whether the culture is a school, a community, a state, or a nation. History teaches that those with power in a culture do not voluntarily share or give it up. It is a dilemma.

A cultural change occurs when a discourse in a school changes to Discourse II. Such a change is related to student learning and student outcomes, teacher and principal learning and development, and an organizational climate that is trusting, collaborative, and caring. Such a change results in a new purpose with new conditions and relationships will evolve that will produce changed outcomes that do

not correlate with race, class or gender. Once teachers and principals see the sorting for what it is, and understand that they are part of it, they may no longer be willing to continue in the old ways. Most of the teachers and principals with whom we work have some understanding of the stuff of Discourse II and what is needed. As one teacher said to us lately, "we never believed and still don't, that they will ever let us do these things." When asked, "who is the they." the reply was, "you know." The old blame thing comes back into play. Teachers, who as a craft, are so concerned about order and control often view themselves as powerless to affect changes in school life.

Innovations and new programs can also be implemented that will assist in developing a new cultural way. It does not take new invention. For example, in a school with a changed discourse and this different way of thinking about schooling, cooperative learning becomes a very different type of program than in a conventional school where it is viewed as a technique or method that a teacher uses once in a while for a change of pace. Cooperative learning truly becomes an interactive teacher-student-school-community learning experience.

Recently, we were at a meeting where school administrators and teachers were being prepared for North Central Outcome Based Evaluation and for state required quality management documentation. The person(s) presenting this information used the phrase "the change

process" at least half a dozen times. People were being admonished to use "the change process" in their efforts with school staffs. It was probably sensible advise that those in charge were encouraging school people to consider that the way one goes about trying to implement something is crucial to success. On the other hand the belief that there is such a thing as "the change process," is a notion whose time has passed. The belief that there is a process that, if followed, will result in programs being effectively implemented and change occurring, is clearly unsupported by research and experience. It is a Discourse I belief. It is still a well- traveled belief. Why do we say this?

The history of efforts to implement programs into school settings the past 25 years, when using "the change process", is evidence of that reality. Not only do educational organizations have difficulty implementing new programs with any sort of fidelity, even when schools do manage to implement them, the result in terms of learning for students is negligible. This is true even though we have knowledge and programs that have demonstrated a capacity in trial and/or developmental contexts to narrow the performance gap between those who begin advantaged and those who begin disadvantaged, while improving the overall intellectual development of everyone: the true test of educational improvement.

Years ago when serious efforts to introduce change into school settings began, there was considerable interest in change and change models. There was no lack of models around - Everett Rogers-Havlock-CBAM-County Agent-Matthew Miles-Schmuck-Runkel-Fullan-Huberman - to mention a few. Miles-Schumck-Fullan-Pomfret looked at organizational conditions and relationships and indicated qualities that seemed to identify organizational settings more inclined toward effectiveness and change. Later, Edmonds indicated that schools that exhibit these effective school characteristics also narrowed the achievement gap. Almost all of this work was aimed at changing schools into places where more students learned more things, through implementing new programs or innovations. Also all this effort to change schools had resulted in very little change occuring and no systemic change.

Beginning in the 80's, among those who studied organizations and change, there was also a growing understanding that something else must be going on that hadn't been grasped yet. These change models that had worked well with agriculture and many other technical systems, did not appear to have the same effect with educational and more service driven organizational cultures. There emerged a growing understanding that this something else is related to what is called cultural conditions of organizations and systems. There seems to be this growing knowledge that organizational settings create beliefs,

values, world views, customs, traditions, ways of doing, etc. -- culture. These cultural ways appear to determine not only what will be actually implemented but also how they will be adapted to "fit" the cultural ways of the organization involved. Making things fit, logically, results in little if any substantive change in the outcomes or purpose of the organization. The new thing fits the old cultural ways.

Schools, as major enterprises of the general society, are therefore cultural by their very nature. It is the natural cultural function of schooling to maintain and reproduce the social system. Schools have this double cultural condition: the social reproduction role and cultural ways of doing schooling that support this reproduction mission. Rather than pursuing change models related to implementation techniques, innovations, and other technology, we must, then, be about the business of discovering ways of developing "cultural change." This is the discourse of Discourse II. If schools are about creating free people for a free world, then that requires a fundamental change in the cultural schooling ways of America, as well as most other places.

Perhaps a brief example might help explain the nature of the problem Discourse II faces. In one of our suburban school districts, they had undergone an intensive five year effort to change from junior

high schools to middle schools. Their efforts were essentially restructuring-forming teams that functioned as teams as opposed to taking turns-developing more flexible use of time-getting a more integrated curriculum across disciplines-installing a school advising program-etc. In effect, they put into place all the research and experience regarding what a middle school should be. This implementation effort had been largely successful and the middle schools now look like what the literature says a middle school should look like.

In a conversation with the middle school principals, the middle school director discovered that the principals were proud of what they and their staffs had accomplished, but everyone was "tired." Maybe we need a little time to catch our breath and just go awhile, was their common feeling. The director asked them, "When you walk down the halls of your school and look in the rooms, what do you see that is very different than what you would have seen before we made the switch?" They began to discuss this and came to the conclusion that in terms of anything fundamental, things were not all that different. Perhaps teachers were working in more collaborative ways, perhaps the subject matter was better connected and integrated, and perhaps the environment was more supporting and caring, but in terms of what teachers and children did on a daily basis, in terms of intellectual

development for everyone, there was very little difference. The changes were primarily in how the adults did their work. Discoure I had guided the restructuring.

"What about learning?" the middle school director asked them. About the same was the consensus. Maybe fewer kids were falling between the cracks. Some teachers are more interested in their own professional growth: not unimportant, but not earth shaking either, especially for their school district. In terms of relationships and conditions in classrooms, very little had really changed.

The principals came to the conclusion "we aren't done yet are we?" In the view of the middle school director, as she relayed it to us, "We were just ready to begin." As the principals began to reflect they decided that now that many of the conditions and relationships of the school structure had changed, it was time to work on the conditions and relationships associated with learning as opposed to teaching. They were ready to begin Discourse II, as one principal put it. The upshot of this meeting was that they selected two teachers in each of their buildings to become part of a study group with them and the other middle school principals.

The middle school director began to search for information they requested. They read books and did abstracts for one another. They visited with various people they had discovered through their reading

or various networks had learned about They met monthly for two or three hours in an evening and shared what they had been thinking, observing, and doing. They were beginning a Discourse II. The middle school director reported that she knew good things were happening when one of the teachers in the group, in a conversation with her, indicated that "I've got my abstract ready for our meeting." Not typical behavior for this particular teacher. "I can hardly wait to see what everyone thinks of it," the teacher continued. After a little over a year of this, the study group decided to expand and become the basis of study groups in their schools that will eventually include parents and community. Now teams of 5-6 teachers from each middle school meet on Friday afternoons twice a month to carry on this discourse. They have decided to have a discourse around "the brain and learning" with their colleagues and their communities. In their community, they have decided that they need to begin a discourse around the issue of intellectual rigor as opposed to academic rigor. We should be talking about "ways of knowing" with subject matter being part of the process rather "academics" as the purpose of the instruction, was a recent consensus.

It is their expectation that at some time in the near future this discourse will lead to "doing different things in our classes." The principals and teachers of these first and second study groups already

have ideas about how they can "change what we are doing." Since part of their reflection together was related to cultural change in organizations, they are smart enough not to propose these changes, but to begin a discourse with others about the ideas they have been studying. They think that they will be able to transform their schools into places of learning for everyone-A Discourse II path. We believe they are right. In three to five years, if this way of thinking and developing is continued, these middle schools will be very different places. They are on the road to becoming learning organizational cultures and the outcomes they will begin to produce will be for all the children in the school. We would predict outcomes, correlated with increasingly higher levels of intellectual development and rigor for students and staff.

The middle school director said to us recently, "It will take us 8-10 years just to have gotten on the path and be on the journey. I think if I had known this when we started, I might not have been so anxious to begin. I wouldn't have been sure we could finish. I'm still not sure, but at least now I see that there is never a finish only how far Discourse II can take you. I will never under estimate teachers and principals again, when they begin on a path of Discourse II and have the power to act together." They are not out of the woods yet. A group of teachers, a group of conservative community members,

different board, or different leadership and things could return to the old cultural ways sooner than anyone might believe. Cultural ways die hard.

There is another person that is the director of a restructuring project for a theme related middle and high school in an urban school district. A school improvement grant was written by a vice principal along with a group of teachers around Discourse II issues, with a problem solving process to address them. In fact, teaming, school families, teaching across disciplines, different use of time, thematic instruction, and portfolios are part of this effort. Similar ideas and conditions as those being developed in the suburban middle schools discussed above. Teachers in these two urban schools demanded stipends for any extra work. They demanded to be told what to do and how much of it, in order to be rewarded and be done. It is the Discourse I culture at work in urban schools.

Many refused to participate and openly opposed the Discourse II ideas. Other vice principals in the two schools were unwilling to create schedules that would allow teams to meet and students to be assigned to families or cohorts, even when doing so greatly simplified things. The vice principal who wrote the grant was made the project director, which alienated her from her colleagues. New discipline policies were developed in the school and district that maintained

Discoure I structures. The top leadership of the district, at times, had to order building level administrators to implement the agreements that had been part of the grant proposal. Vice principals in both schools openly criticized and opposed the project to the point of appearing to sabotage. Both principals publicly supported the project and indicated their support in private, but whenever any of their vice principals or teachers did something to sabotage the project, they were always unwilling to override them or change what they had done. Anything that went wrong in either of the schools was blamed on "that project." This is a tale twice told in urban districts throughout the land.

The real issues involved were about gender resentment, racism in the school culture, and social reproduction, as well as community arguments over "whose school is it." There was also the fact that these two schools were full of urban students and that the general culture has historically identified as the ones who are not supposed to do well. Only a very few in these school cultures really believe that these students have quality and worth. These very changes that would have a chance of transforming these two schools into places that could dramatically improve the quality of learning for most of the students in the school were never allowed to ever get started.

The lesson to be learned here is not that somehow the people in

the suburban school district were more able or more enlightened and thus things seem to work better. The project director in the urban school district knew the same things and wanted to do the same things as the suburban director. These things had been written in the grant. The cultural thing to know is that if we switched the two groups of people involved, the outcomes in the two different school settings would be the same. In an amazingly short amount of time the suburban teachers and principals moved to the urban school cultures would be behaving just like, and getting the same outcomes, as the current urban staff. There wouldn't even be a blink. The urban school culture is part of the teaching craft knowledge: sorting, blaming, screening, framing dropouts, as Michelle Fine writes.

Similarly, move the urban principals and staff to the suburban district and almost overnight, they will behave just like, and get the same outcomes, as the old suburban staff. This particular suburban school district is full of kids who are supposed to do well and the urban district full of kids who are not. Who the individual educators are in either of the districts makes little difference. They all perform as their schooling cultures, including the university, have prepared them to perform.

So we argue very strongly that any real effort to make substantive (systemic) change, must begin with a Discourse II disource

in schools. A Discourse II that blames no one and deconstructs what is really going on. It must have leadership that asks smart questions and leadership that waits until there is sufficient dissatisfaction with what is, among not only the staff, but the community and students as well, before even thinking about implementing something new. We must trust that teachers, principals and others who take part in such a continuing discourse also know how to begin to develop a Discourse II school. It takes leadership that knows where to find the resources and information to help those in schools find and develop the changes that seek. Once there is this new and different discourse -- once the cultural ground is different -- then new ideas and programs will and can be implemented in a very different way. The discourse will continue and the adaptations will go in the direction of the transformed cultural discourse rather than the old cultural ways. Unless, of course, the old hegemony rises up and swats them.

Discourse II paths are full of land mines and ambushes. It takes courage, intelligence, gile, dertermination, sensitivity, patience, caring and time. We do not fully understand how to develop, prepare, cahjole or entice the type of people to lead and carry out a Discourse II agenda-especially in urban schools. But we are looking and trying to find these ways, becaue we are convinced that anything else is just blowing smoke. Interestingly, many of the participants in our Block/

Cohort Program have at least a vision of what Discourse II is about. Whether or not they will be able to follow that vision when they get leadership positions is of course another issue entirely.

Staying on a Discourse I path means we continue to deny a future and life to more and more of our children of poverty, children of color and women. Such a course leads us in the wrong direction for the 21st Century. Nevertheless, it still appears that America remains hell bent for a Discourse I schooling. It s not clear that a Discourse II army will come from the ranks of the Discourse I teaching force and leadership at state and national levels. Alice Walker talks about the secret of joy being resistance to the hegemony. This is our issue and dilemma, where do we find these joyous people? The ones who will find joy in Discourse II paths to Discourse II schools.